Met Office

March 2017

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

At the start of March, the weather was changeable with westerly and south-westerly winds, and mild for most but with some wintry showers in Scotland, mainly over higher ground.The first half continued mild and changeable but with some quieter interludes, particularly in the second week and in the south-east. The UK escaped the storm that brought damaging winds to northern France on the 6th.The weather briefly turned colder between the 20th and the 22nd, with some snow in the north, but several dry sunny days followed under high pressure.It turned wetter during the last four days.

The UK mean temperature was 7.3 °C, which is 1.8 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, making it the equal-fifth warmest March in a series since 1910. Mean maximum temperatures were between 1.5 and 2.5°C above average across most of the country, with the highest anomalies in East Anglia and the south-east, while mean minimum temperatures were more than 2 °C above over much of southern England but less than 1 °C above in parts of Scotland. Rainfall was below normal in the south-east and in parts of Scotland, but above normal in Wales, north-west England and the Borders, with 103% of average rainfall overall. Sunshine was 118% of average, and it was a sunny month over most of the country, especially so in north-west Scotland, but sunshine was below normal in south Wales and the West Country.

The UK monthly extremes were as follows: A maximum temperature of 22.1 °C was recorded at Gravesend (Kent) on the 30th. A minimum temperature of -8.6 °C was recorded at Dalwhinnie (Inverness-shire) on the 22nd. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 18th, 109.0 mm of rain fell at Seathwaite (Cumbria). Wind gusts of 67 knots (77 mph) were recorded at Fair Isle and Lerwick (Shetland) on the 14th. A snow depth of 14 cm was recorded at Copley (County Durham) on the 22nd.

Weather Impacts

March began where February left off, with unsettled conditions dominating. On the 2nd, snow and ice created some difficult travelling conditions across the Peak District and Pennines, and the Snake Pass was closed due to snow for much of the morning. Although a deep low pressure system brought considerable disruption and 120 mph gusts to north-western France on the 6th, no specific impacts were noted in the UK.

The weather was more benign and mild for the next two weeks, punctuated by a brief windy spell for the Northern Isles and north of Lewis on the 14th. Some short-lived power cuts occurred on Lewis during the day, and further away a high-sided vehicle blew over on the Forth Road Bridge, forcing a lengthy closure of the bridge to all traffic during the afternoon peak.

On the 21st, the M8 was closed westbound by a jack-knifed lorry during the morning peak, and the A702 into Edinburgh was closed due to multiple collisions. The M77 was also partially blocked for a time, as well as some other closures on higher-level routes such as the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful. On the 22nd, many roads in Cumbria were affected by snow including the Kirkstone Pass, the A590, the A684 and the A66. The M6 was also affected by an accident for a while near Shap and Tebay.

The weather turned warmer for the remainder of the month. On the 28th, fog caused disruption to flights in London, and the Woolwich Ferry on the Thames was suspended due to fog. The fine conditions also led to a marked increase in wildfire activity in south Wales, which tested the resources of the Fire and Rescue service.

England diary of highlights

March began mild and changeable with mainly south-westerly winds. The south-westerly type persisted until mid-month but there were some quieter interludes. It was unsettled and briefly colder from the 20th to the 22nd with some snow in the north. Several days of dry sunny weather followed, but it turned unsettled again and very mild for the last few days.

The mean temperature for March was 2.2 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, and it was the warmest March since 1957 and the 3rd warmest in a series from 1910. Rainfall was 109% of average, and it was a wet month in the north-west but a rather dry month in the south-east. Sunshine was generally above average except in the West Country, with 115% of average overall.

1st to 7th

There was a cool start on the 1st with -4.6 °C recorded at Topcliffe (North Yorkshire), and rain affected southern counties, spreading northwards later. The 2nd was a largely bright day, with 9 hours of sunshine recorded at Odiham (Hampshire), before rain, sleet and snow arrived in the far north in the evening. The 3rd was mild across the south but wet elsewhere with early rain and showers which moved slowly northwards. The 4th saw bands of slow-moving showers, with rain across the south-west later. It was wet with strong winds in the south on the 5th but brighter in the north-east with 9.2 hours of sunshine at Boulmer (Northumberland). The 6th saw rain across Cornwall and Devon while showers developed further north and east. The 7th was milder with widespread sunshine before rain spread into all districts in the evening.

8th to 12th

The 8th was mainly cloudy with patchy rain across southern counties, and mild with 15.1 °C reached at Northolt (London). After a cloudy start, the 9th became dry and sunny except in the south-west. The 10th was a mainly cloudy but dry day with a few fog or mist patches across the south-west and it was mild again. Another cloudy day followed on the 11th with mist or fog patches but there were some sunny spells for south-east England where the temperature reached 17.7 °C at Gravesend (Kent). The 12th was cloudy again with patchy rain, which moved from west to east across all areas, but this broke up, allowing some late sunshine across western areas.

13th to 16th

The 13th was dry, mild and sunny except in the far north-west, with 10.6 hours of sunshine recorded at East Malling (Kent). It was largely dry and mild again on the 14th, with sunny spells in the north and the far south-east, but with strong winds across parts of the north. There was widespread sunshine and it was mostly dry across all regions on the 15th with 18.8 °C reached at Kew Gardens (London) and 10.8 hours of sunshine at Shawbury (Shropshire). On the 16th fog, mainly over central and southern parts, cleared to leave a sunny day in the far east but cloud and rain reached the north later.

17th to 23rd

It was windy on the 17th with heavy rain over the north spreading southwards during the day. The 18th started dry in the south but it was windy and wet in many areas, the rain heaviest in the north-west with 58.6 mm recorded at Alston Springhouse (Cumbria) and a gust of 67 mph recorded at High Bradfield (South Yorkshire). It was wet in the north-west on the 19th with brighter spells and patchy rain elsewhere. The north was wet again on the 20th but the rain cleared southwards leaving a mix of sunshine and showers. Showers through the south-west spread inland on the 21st, some of which were wintry, but it stayed dry and sunny over the south-east. The 22nd was wet throughout and heavy rain turned to snow, mainly on high ground, in northern districts, with 44.0 mm recorded at Blencathra (Cumbria) and 14 cm of lying snow at Copley (County Durham). The 23rd started with rain in the south-west but this cleared to leave a mainly dry and bright day.

24th to 27th

It was warm and dry on the 24th after early rain in the south-west, and sunny in the north. It was mainly dry, warm and sunny on the 25th with 12.3 hours of sunshine recorded at East Malling (Kent). Another dry and sunny day followed on the 26th after an early frost in the north. There was persistent cloud and morning fog over central and eastern counties on the 27th but otherwise it was another sunny day.

28th to 31st

There was extensive fog in central and eastern parts on the 28th, which cleared by midday, but bands of rain and showers crossed the country later. It was generally cloudy and wet on the 29th, wettest in the north and west. It was sunny and warm in the south-east on the 30th with a maximum temperature of 22.1 °C at Gravesend (Kent), but it turned wet in northern parts later. There was a mix of sunshine and showers on the 31st after early rain across the north.

Wales diary of highlights

March began mild and unsettled with south-westerly winds, and this continued through the first three weeks except for a brief fine spell from the 12th to the 15th. After a brief colder interlude, it was generally warm and sunny from the 24th to 27th but then turned unsettled.

The mean temperature for March was 1.8 °C above the long-term average. It was a wet month almost everywhere with 132% of average rainfall. Sunshine was 98% of average, and it was generally cloudier than average in the south but sunnier in the north.

1st to 7th

The 1st had a frosty but dry morning followed by rain spreading from the west. The 2nd was cool and breezy but largely bright with sunshine and showers, and a 67 mph gust was recorded at Aberdaron (Gwynedd). The 3rd started wet, the rain spreading slowly northwards during the day. The 4th was a day of sunshine and scattered showers. The 5th was cool and showery after rain cleared from northern areas in the morning. After a cool start inland, the 6th was a day of sunshine and showers. The 7th was mainly cloudy but dry.

8th to 11th

It was milder on the 8th, with some sunny spells in the north, but otherwise mainly cloudy with patchy rain and showers in the south. The 9th began cloudy but soon improved to leave a dry and sunny day before more cloud moved in from the west in the evening, and it was mild with a maximum of 16.9°C at Usk (Monmouthshire). The 10th was a mainly cloudy, mild and dry day with a few fog or mist patches. It was cloudy and mild again on the 11th with mist or fog patches and patchy rain in the north.

12th to 15th

The 12th was another cloudy day, with patchy rain spreading eastwards, but cloud broke in time to allow some late sunshine. The 13th was mild and dry with widespread sunny spells. The 14th was warm again, with 17.0 °C recorded at Hawarden (Flintshire), and mostly dry with sunny spells before turning cloudier later. Mostly dry, sunny and mild on the 15th, especially across central and northern districts.

16th to 22nd

It was cloudy with fog and patchy rain in places on the 16th, which cleared before more general rain reached the north during the afternoon. The 17th was wet and windy and turned out to be the wettest day of the month at Lake Vyrnwy (Powys) with 48.0 mm. It was windy again on the 18th with rain in most places at times during the day. The 19th was cloudy with patchy rain, mainly in the north. It was wet and windy everywhere to start the 20th, the rain clearing away in the afternoon, leaving sunshine and a few showers.

There was a mix of sunshine and showers for the 21st, the showers becoming more widespread and heavier during the afternoon. After a dry start on the 22nd, rain spread north during the afternoon, turning wintry over higher ground.

23rd to 27th

The 23rd was mainly dry and sunny after early patchy rain across southern counties. The 24th was dry, warm and sunny. It was dry, sunny and increasingly warm on the 25th with 18.7 °C reached at Porthmadog (Gwynedd), the warmest day of the month, and 11.9 hours of sunshine was measured at Lake Vyrnwy, the sunniest day of the month also. It was sunny again on the 26th after a cool start, and remained dry and bright for the 27th but with persistent cloud over the east of the country.

28th to 31st

The 28th started cloudy, with fog in places persisting until noon, then the afternoon was brighter with showers before more rain arrived in the evening. It was generally cloudy and wet on the 29th. It remained generally cloudy and wet on the 30th, the rain heaviest rain over the north and west. The 31st had sunshine and showers.

Scotland diary of highlights

March began mostly bright and showery with westerly or south-westerly winds. It remained generally changeable and mild until mid-month, then turned colder between the 20th and 22nd with some snow in places. It was dry and sunny from the 23rd to 27th, but turned unsettled in the last four days.

The mean temperature for March was 1.3 °C above the long-term average, and the positive anomaly was generally larger by day than by night. Rainfall was near or rather below normal except in the Borders, with 91% of average overall. It was a sunny March except in Fife, and particularly sunny in the north-west, with 128% of average overall, the 9th sunniest in a series from 1929.

1st to 7th

After a cold start, the 1st was a day of sunshine and showers, some wintry. The 2nd was a cool, blustery day with sunshine and showers, the showers again turning wintry over higher ground .The 3rd was mostly dry and sunny with 9.7 hours of sunshine recorded at Kinloss (Moray) before rain spread into southern counties by evening. It was cool and increasingly wet on the 4th with showers or rain spreading north, heaviest across the north-east. After early showers on the 5th it turned brighter with 7.9 hours of sunshine at Prestwick (Ayrshire). It was showery again on the 6th but with longer sunny spells across the north. There was a frosty start in the north on the 7th but after a bright morning rain spread from the west during the afternoon.

8th to 12th

It was wet and windy across the north-west on the 8th but brighter further south. The 9th started cloudy, with patchy rain across the Borders and the North-west Highlands, but this cleared to allow some sunshine before it turned cloudy in the west later. The 10th was a cloudy, mild and mainly dry day with a few fog or mist patches across the south. The 11th was another mainly cloudy day with patchy rain spreading east and fog and mist across the south but it became clearer across the north-west. The 12th was a generally cloudy day but it was the warmest day of the year so far reaching 16.4 °C at Fyvie Castle (Aberdeenshire).

13th to 17th

The 13th was a bright, mild and mostly dry day with lengthy sunny spells across Border regions. The 14th saw sunshine and blustery showers with strengthening winds across the north, and gusts reached 77 mph across the Northern Isles. It stayed windy in the north on the 15th with showers across the North-west Highlands but

it was cloudy and rather mild elsewhere. The 16th was cloudy, with rain across western parts turning more showery later. It was windy and very wet everywhere on the 17th.

18th to 22nd

The 18th was breezy; though starting mainly dry, rain or showers arrived later for most places. It was wet to start over the Borders on the 19th, but the rain cleared to leave sunshine and blustery showers, with sleet or snow over higher ground. It was windy with rain clearing the east during the morning of the 20th, followed by widespread wintry showers, and it was several degrees colder than of late. Sunshine and frequent wintry showers covered the northern half of the country on the 21st, with 7 cm of snow accumulating at Penicuik (Midlothian), but it stayed drier and brighter through Border areas. The 22nd saw sleet and snow over higher ground in the south but it was more showery across northern districts after a cold start, with an overnight minimum of -8.6 °C at Dalwhinnie (Inverness-shire).

23rd to 27th

After another cold night, with temperatures down to -7.3 °C at Kinbrace (Sutherland), the 23rd was dry and largely sunny but cool overall. It was mostly sunny after a frosty start on the 24th though with some patchy rain in the far north. The 25th was dry, sunny and warm, with 12.2 hours of sunshine at Charterhall (Berwickshire). Another sunny day followed on the 26th, and Cromdale (Moray) recorded the month's highest maximum of 20.6 °C. It remained sunny over most parts on the 27th, although a little cloudier around northern and western coasts.

28th to 31st

Sunny through Moray and Grampian on the 28th, but it was cloudy elsewhere and rain and showers reached the south-west by late afternoon. The 29th was cloudy with rain moving north across the country. It was bright and very mild in the north-east on the 30th but cloudy elsewhere with heavy showers through the south from late afternoon: Eskdalemuir (Dumfries and Galloway) recorded 46.8 mm of rain. The 31st was also wet with rain in the south-west slowly spreading north.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

March was unsettled and mild with westerly or south-westerly winds until the 19th, though with a brief drier interlude from the 13th to the 15th. After a brief colder spell, it was dry and often sunny from the 23rd to 27th, but unsettled again to end the month.

The mean temperature for March was 1.4 °C above the long-term average. Rainfall was mostly near or slightly above normal, with 113% of average overall. It was a sunny month except in the south-west, with 122% of average sunshine.

1st to 7th

After a dry morning on the 1st, it became showery with a band of rain moving across the country later. A cool start on the 2nd with wintry showers gave way to rain which spread north across all parts. The 3rd was a very wet day with over 25 mm in many places and 75.0 mm recorded at Trassey Slievenaman (County Down), the highest total of the month. It remained cloudy and cool on the 4th with scattered showers. The 5th saw patchy rain across the south but it was dry and bright elsewhere with 9.4 hours of sunshine at Magilligan (County Londonderry). Sunshine and afternoon showers on the 6th after a cool start with frost in places. The 7th was cool and cloudy with patchy rain becoming heavier later.

8th to 12th

It was dry and warmer throughout on the 8th with plenty of sunshine but it was breezy along North Channel coasts. The 9th was mainly dry and warm with sunny spells but turned cloudy from the west in the evening.

The 10th was cloudy and dry with a few early fog or mist patches. The 11th was a cloudy day, with rain clearing eastwards in the morning, but the north became brighter later with a maximum temperature of 16.0°C at Giant's Causeway (County Antrim). The 12th was another cloudy day, with patchy rain which died out to allow some late sunshine.

13th to 15th

It was fine and dry on the 13th with widespread sunshine, and warm with 16.6 °C recorded at Murlough (County Down). It stayed mild and mostly dry through the 14th with widespread sunny spells but there were strong winds along the Antrim coast. The 15th was mild and dry throughout but cloudier than the previous two days.

16th to 22nd

Patchy rain on the 16th cleared to leave an afternoon of sunshine and blustery showers. It was cloudy, wet and windy on both the 17th and 18th. After a wet morning on the 19th the rain cleared, leaving sunshine and blustery showers for the afternoon. It was cooler and windier on the 20th with sunshine and showers. After an early frost, the 21st was windy again with more sunshine and showers. Rain spread eastwards on the 22nd and turned to sleet and snow over higher ground.

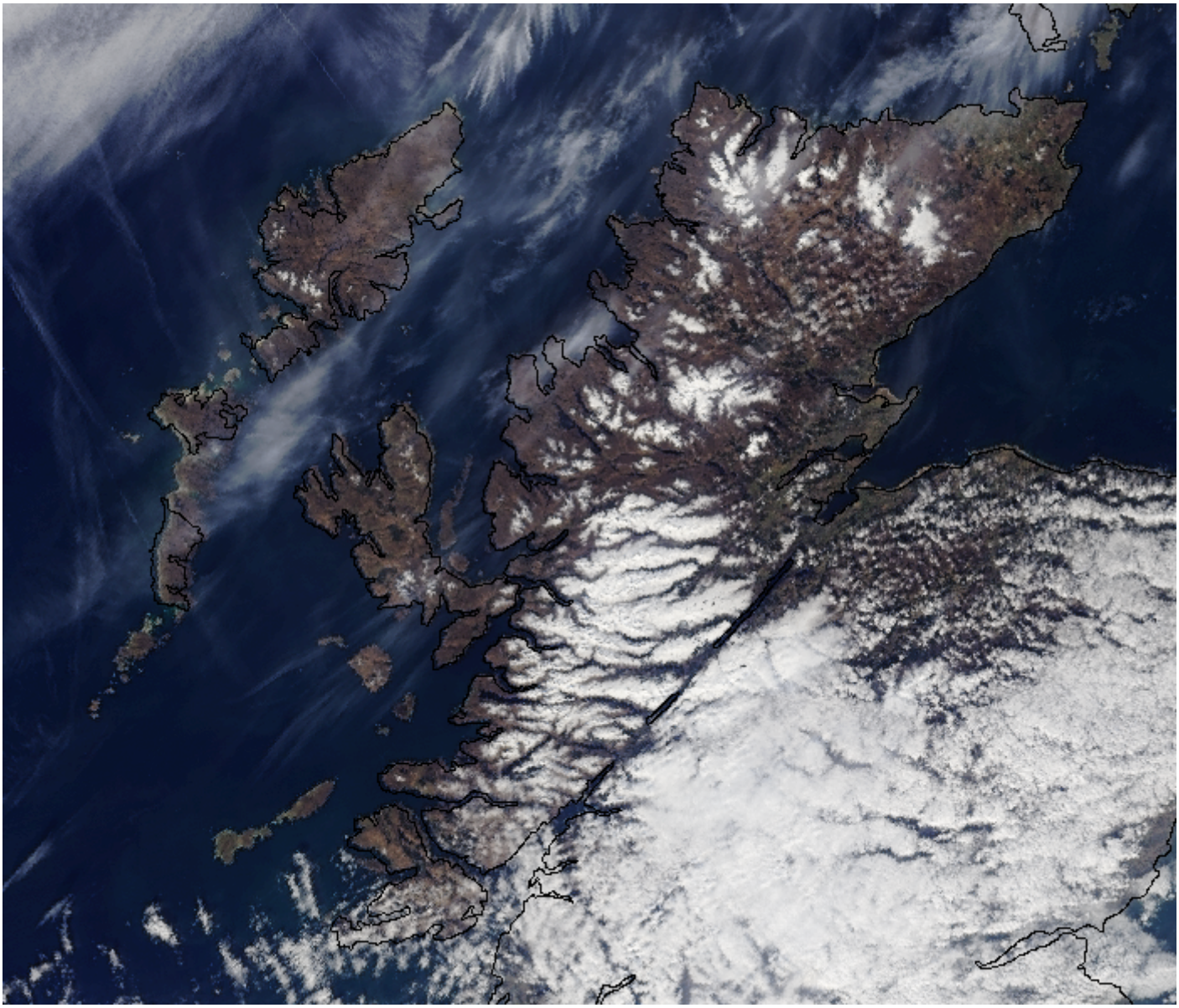
23rd to 27th

The 23rd was dry but rather cool and cloudy. It was dry, warm and sunny throughout on the 24th after an early widespread frost. Warm, dry and sunny weather continued on the 25th with 17.6 °C reached at Castlederg (County Tyrone), the warmest day of the month. Katesbridge (County Down) had earlier seen the coldest night of the month with -5.4 °C overnight. Sunny conditions prevailed through the 26th and 27th after a cool start on both days, with the month's highest sunshine total, 11.7 hours, at Magilligan (County Londonderry) on the 26th.

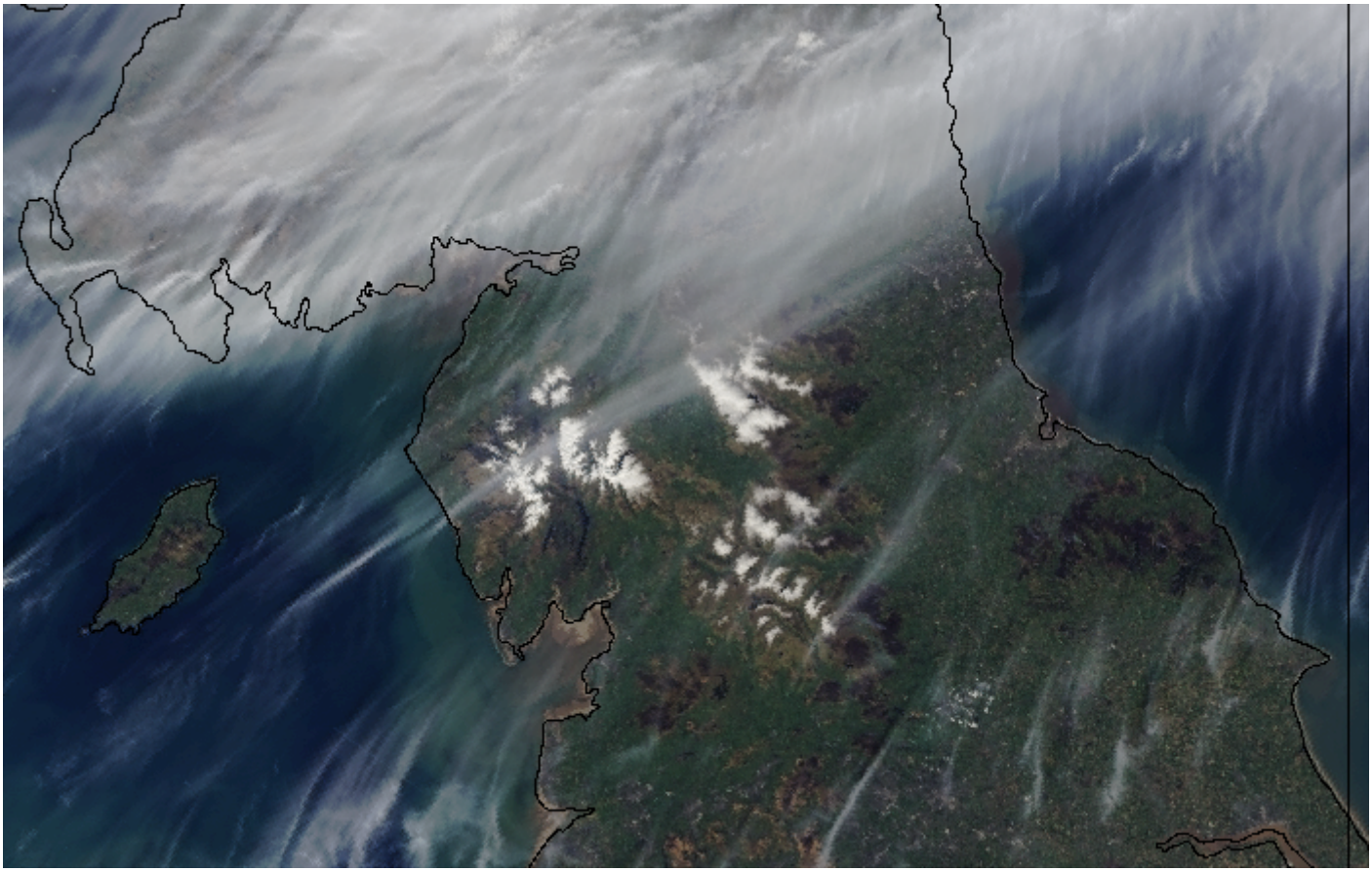
28th to 31st

It was cloudier and cooler on the 28th with rain or showers, and generally cloudy and wet on the 29th. The 30th was cloudy again with rain or showers. A wet morning for all on the 31st as rain pushed slowly north leaving sunshine and showers behind.

The satellite image below shows snow cover across the mountains of north-west Scotland on 23 March 2017.
Image copyright Met Office / NOAA/ NASA



The satellite image below shows snow cover across the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and North Pennines on 24 March 2017. Image copyright Met Office / NOAA / NASA.



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